

My name is Jim Mathews. I am the chief operating officer of HomeTown Pharmacy, which owns and operates 27 retail and three long-term care pharmacies in Michigan. Personally, I am a third generation pharmacist and have practiced in many different areas of pharmacy over the last 41 years.

I'm here today in support of Senate Bill 373, which allows the Michigan Board of Pharmacy to authorize pilot projects, something they're not currently able to do. In a growing number of states, Boards have been granted this authority. The bill gives discretion to the Board of Pharmacy to authorize, decline to authorize or modify any given pilot project to ensure that the public's best interest is served and their safety is guaranteed.

The specific pilot project that HomeTown Pharmacy is interested in is telepharmacy. Currently, the Michigan statutes allow a pharmacist to only be in charge of one pharmacy at any given time. telepharmacy enables that one pharmacist to be in charge of multiple pharmacies simultaneously. This is done through technology that allows the pharmacist to check the work of a pharmacy technician remotely and to counsel patients through a Skype-like connection.

A recent study shows that more than 900 rural pharmacies across the U.S. have closed over the last 6 years. This translates to almost 5,000 lost jobs and 4.8 million residents who lost their "local" pharmacy and access to the patient care services it provided. It has been estimated that more than 2,500 other pharmacies are at risk, which could potentially affect more than 15,000 jobs. Speaking from personal experience, HomeTown has turned down 6-8 small town pharmacists who wanted to sell their pharmacies to us. All these pharmacies were located in towns without another pharmacy for many miles. The primary reason we declined their offers was that the stores could not operate profitably while carrying the full burden of a pharmacist's salary. If telepharmacy were allowed, we

could have purchased these pharmacies, the towns would still have local access to pharmacy services and a handful of people would still be employed.